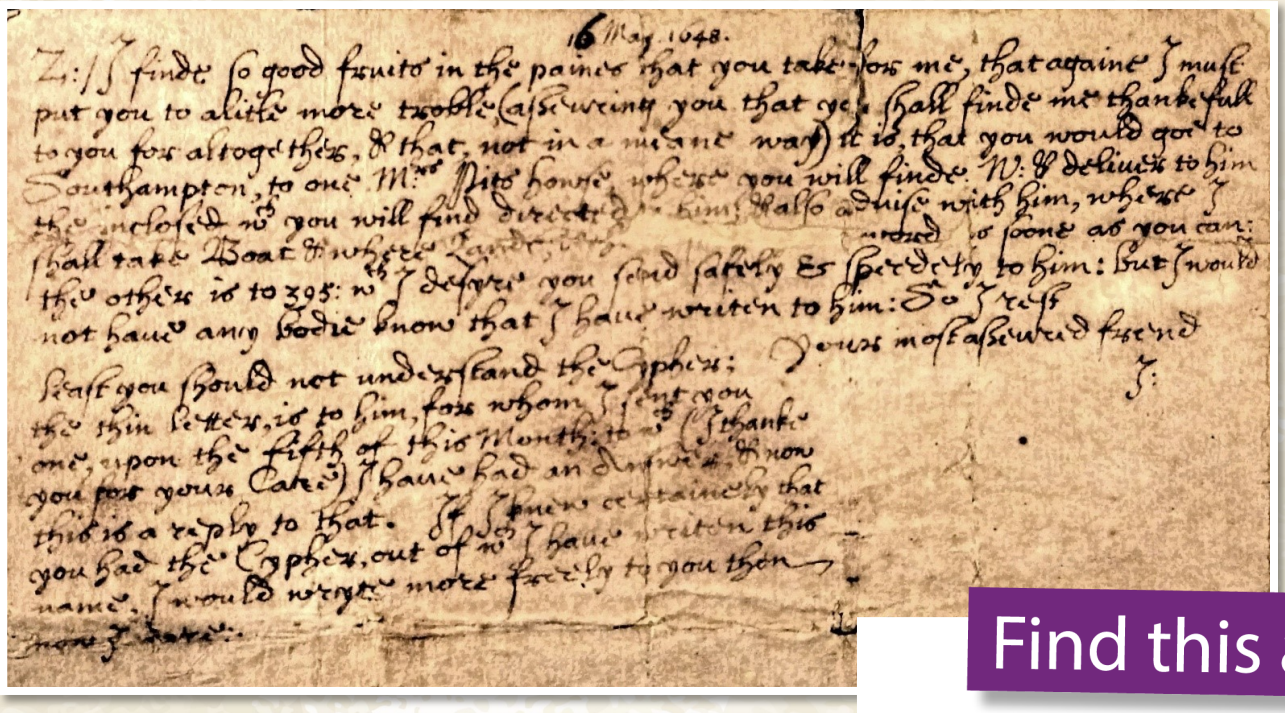
TOP TREASURE



16 May 1648.

Z: I finde so good fruite in the paines that you take for me, that againe I must put you to a little more trouble (assuring you that you shall finde me thankefull to you for altogether) & that, not in a meane wayes) it is, that you would goe to Southampton, to one Mr. Nitos house, where you will finde W: H delivre to him the inclosed w^ch you will find directed to him; Also advise with him, where I shall take Boat & where Land; & advise me with speed so soone as you can: this other is to Z95: w^ch I desire you send safely & speedily to him: but I would not have any bodie know that I have written to him: So I rest

Yours most assewred friend

Z:

least you should not understand the Cypher:

the thin letter, is to him, for whom I sent you one, upon the fifth of this Month: to w^ch (I thanke you for your Care) I have had an answere, & now this is a reply to that. If I knew certainely that you had the Cypher, out of w^ch I have written this name, I would write more freely to you then now I dare.

Find this at

Carisbrooke Castle Museum

1898

Education Contact:
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Questions

- What do you think it is?
- What do you think it is made from?
- How big do you think it is?
- Who do think wrote it and why?

FACT FILE

Letter from King Charles I

What is it?

This letter was written by King Charles I. He asks Sir Edward Worsley to deliver a letter to Captain Silius Titus in Southampton and to ask the captain where he can get the boat to help him escape from the Isle of Wight. The King's name and those of the people he asks to help him are in a secret code (see the translation below) .

Basic facts

Size: 17cm wide.

What is it made from?

Ink writing on paper.

How old is it?

It was written on the 16 May 1648

Significance

It's incredible to think that this letter was written by King Charles at Carisbrooke Castle over 450 years ago. It is a primary source of evidence that tells us exactly what the King was thinking and planning to do.

The fact that he uses code in his letters and disguises his writing shows us just how dangerous sending and receiving these letters was, otherwise why would you bother? Anybody found helping the King with his escape plans would have put their lives in great danger.

It has been folded into small squares. Why do you think he did this? It may have been taken out of the castle by being hidden in the King's dirty laundry.

Other facts

Why was King Charles held prisoner at the castle? Parliament was unhappy with the way the King ran the country. The supporters of Parliament and those of the King went to war against each other. This was called the English Civil War and lasted from 1642 to 1651, with around 180,000 people dying.

During the Civil War the King came to the Carisbrooke Castle for safety but was eventually held prisoner there.

This letter was part of a second escape plan. He planned to escape out of his bedroom window on the 28 May by using acid to loosen the mortar that held in the bars. He also bribed the guards to look the other way as he climbed out of the window, but they betrayed him. He then planned to use a boat to escape from the Island, perhaps to France to join his wife.

His failed escape plans and the fact that he was plotting a second civil war with the Scots eventually led to him being put on trial and executed in on 30 January 1649.

TOP TREASURE

Translation

Z: / I find so good fruits in the pains that you take for me, that again I must put you to a little more trouble, (assuring you that you shall find me thankful to you for altogether, & that, not in a meane way) it is, that you would go to Southampton, to one Mrs Pits house, where you will find W: & deliver to him the enclosed which you will find directed to him, & also advise with him, where I shall take Boat & where land, & the [a *hole in the paper*] word as soon as you can: the other is to 395: which I desire you send safely & speedily to him: but I would not have anybody know that I have written to him: So I rest

Your most assured friend :J (or I)

King Charles used a code instead of full names to keep his supporters' identities secret. In this letter 'Z' stands for Sir Edward Worsley and 'W' for Captain Silius Titus, an ex-parliamentary soldier appointed to attend the king who was won over to the royalist cause. The 'I' or 'J' at the end stands for King Charles.

Why don't you?

- Get a summary of the Civil War with this 3 minute video: tiny.cc/charles-1
- Watch this 3 minute video to find out more about King Charles at Carisbrooke Castle: tiny.cc/charles-carisbrooke There is more information about the King's time at Carisbrooke here: tiny.cc/royal-prisoner Turn the information into a cartoon strip or come up with your own escape plan.
- These links will give you some ideas about how codes are created: tiny.cc/code-breaking and tiny.cc/morse-code Create your own secret code or cipher. Send a message to a friend. Make sure you give them a key to your code so that they can crack it!

TOP TREASURE

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